INTRODUCTION

Like all intellectual work, the concerns that led to this thesis were shaped by a particular time and place. In September 2003, I began a Master's degree in the Department of International Politics of what was then the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. During this year, I took a course called 'Critical Security Studies: Contemporary Theories.' By the time I enrolled, I did not know what 'critical' meant. During my undergraduate years I had been trained in some vague notions from realism. I knew about the state of nature and the relentless search for security; I knew that states wanted power; I knew that the international realm was an arena of competition and often aggression. I did not know much more than this about realism. I never read Hans Morgenthau, E.H. Carr or Kenneth Waltz in those years. My awareness of these realist notions never crystallized into a realist worldview.

When I began my Master’s degree in Aberystwyth, the word ‘critical’ sounded like something sophisticated and of crucial importance – a marked difference from my previous studies, in which I spent perhaps too much time dwelling on the political thought of Xenophon, Confucius and Marsilius of Padua. I was hoping these ‘Critical Security Studies’ would help me understand what was happening in the world around me. This was the aftermath of September 11, 2001 – and the security landscape was undergoing great change. Iraq had been invaded by coalition forces earlier that year. Counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan seemed to be in a quagmire. Hundreds of suspected terrorists were being held at the Guantanamo Bay detention centre. Osama Bin Laden issued menacing statements. Bali had been bombed, and there were threats of further bombings, of chemical attacks, of weapons of mass destruction. In the United States, civil liberties groups opposed the PATRIOT Act. Security measures were tightened in airports and other public spaces. There was talk of 'Big Brother,' of exceptional measures for exceptional times.

The Master’s degree in Aberystwyth was, indeed, an important formative experience for me. The course ‘Contemporary Theories’ began with a session on realism. We were reminded of its main tenets and identified its main weaknesses. What followed was a weekly succession of theories and approaches to security: constructivism, poststructuralism, feminism, the Copenhagen School, and
others. In one of the seminars, I learned about Critical Theory and the Welsh School of Security Studies. All offered critiques of realism and saw security as something more than the balance in the number of warheads or the absence of war between states.

I never learned so much in such a short period. My initial ignorance of the field of Security Studies was such that I was ready to take any approach in its own terms. They all made sense to me: in that semester I was a constructivist, a critical theorist, a poststructuralist, a feminist. I was converted to the virtues of Marxism, and found securitization theory a fascinating perspective. Taken together, these ideas helped me come to terms with the political events of the day. By the end of the course, I had forgotten about Xenophon and the half-baked realist notions floating in my mind. There seemed to be many opportunities in the new theories I learned. I wanted to make the most of them.

In the very last seminar of the course, we were asked the following question: which of the theories do you think is the best? After learning about so many theories, we were being asked to subscribe to one. I remember trying to make up my mind until it was my turn to answer. Although I was not sure, I answered that the best seemed to be the Welsh School, also known as the Aberystwyth School. This approach, inspired by the critical theorizing of Marx, Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, had been put forward in the work of Ken Booth, Richard Wyn Jones, and Pinar Bilgin, among other authors.

I was in fact convinced of the virtues of this approach. I was particularly taken by its desire to question established truths; by its engagement with ‘real people in real places’; by its explicit commitment to emancipation; by the distinction between traditional and critical theorizing. I liked the way this approach relied on the notion of immanent critique, according to which political transformation can be triggered by working from already existing potential and from the contradictions in dominant arrangements. I agreed with this School that the world of security did not serve the interests of the great majority of the population of the planet. I was convinced that political transformation was necessary, and that it required a change in the thought and practice of security. In sum, I believed emancipation was a great idea. And I still do.

I was not prepared to take sides, and so felt uncomfortable about having to choose the ‘best approach.’ All theories seemed to have something worthwhile to say. Perhaps naively, I thought that I
could draw on different approaches as it suited me best. I thought I could, for example, draw on securitization theory to understand the construction of the 'terrorist threat,' whilst relying on the idea of emancipation to understand the plight of the millions of people who, despite the vast sums of money spent on the 'war on terror,' had no access to clean water or life-saving vaccination. The question I was asked in that seminar seemed to imply that I was indeed being naïve.

Realism no longer held sway in British academia in the post 9/11 period, and new students like me were confronted with a diversity of theories and approaches that could be pursued without great risk to one's career. The disciplinary power of the realist academic 'establishment' was no longer as pervasive as it had been in previous decades. Ken Booth's reflections about the personal trajectory that had made him question the intellectual and political assumptions hitherto guiding his career seemed, at first glance, a thing of the past.¹ In my own personal trajectory, realism had never been an academic orthodoxy to fight against. I could witness many of the tenets of realism put into practice in the 'daily business' of world politics, but in the academia almost everyone I met seemed to assume that realism was flawed.

This does not mean, however, that there were no disciplinary pressures and tensions. I would encounter them as I deepened my knowledge on the subject and began to be aware of how approaches to security were often built by emphasizing their difference in relation to others. Soon I learned about the supposedly incompatible assumptions of different approaches. Each approach warned me against the dangerous political implications of others. I was told, for example, that 'the poststructuralists' reduced everything to language, and that their worldview was relativistic and politically conservative. I learned from others that 'the Welsh School' wanted to impose Western views, and that it was complicit with colonialism and imperialism.

A couple of months into my Master's I had experienced the complicated relationships between different critical approaches to security. I felt that each theory was pressured into drawing lines and establishing differences from others. Following from these border exercises, there was a tendency to

pick teams.' The question I was asked in that seminar was an example of this tendency: the pressure to choose whether one would ‘be part of the Welsh School’ or ‘be a poststructuralist,’ to name just two approaches. In sum, the field of Security Studies in which I was schooled in was remarkable for its theoretical diversity. However, at the same time – and in the absence of a powerful 'realist Other' – it encouraged the delimitation of theoretical boundaries, the allegiance to 'schools,' the living-out of 'labels.'

This, I believe, is an understandable phenomenon: there is a degree of assurance in belonging to a group of like-minded people. Identification with some and distinction from others are, to a certain extent, two inevitable steps when seeking to delimit one’s identity. However – and perhaps as a result of my initial amazement with the theoretical richness of the field – I always thought that something was being lost with these differentiations and exclusions. A part of me still believed that it was possible to learn from various critical approaches to security at the same time.

This thesis is, indeed, the product of a particular time and place. But it is also the result of a personal experience of being schooled into a critical approach to security – namely, the Welsh School – and of experiencing in the field a series of differentiations, divisions, silences and exclusions. At some point during my research, I went back to Booth’s ‘Reflections of a Fallen Realist’ and found a deeper layer of meaning: the problem for Booth was not realism per se, but rather the pernicious influence of the ideas that make us what we are. Specifically, Booth was cautioning against the tendency of ideas to become orthodoxies. His point was that you should always question what you have been taught. This is the main drive behind this thesis: a desire to question what I have been taught.

Defining the problem

Although the idea of a critical approach to security was not exactly new, it was the publication, in 1997, of an edited volume by Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams that would give birth to the label Critical Security Studies (hereafter CSS). The editors of this volume saw CSS as a ‘broad church,' an

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‘umbrella-term’ joining together different disciplines and theories in the study of security.\(^3\) The main commitment of CSS – and the thread joining all the approaches represented in this volume – was the desire to question the dominance of realism in Security Studies. This was achieved by framing security as a political phenomenon.

Seeing security as political implied many things. It meant seeing security as something more than a natural response to a self-evident threat, and thus recognizing the political struggles underlying understandings and practices of security. It meant seeing security as always located in a specific historical and social context. It also meant recognizing that visions of security change according to one’s political points of view and one’s ethical choices. Importantly, it implied an analysis of the implications of security for how politics was organized. As will be argued in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the ‘politicization’ of security is a tendency that can be traced back at least to the 1980s, although it was given extraordinary depth, scope and sense of purpose with the ‘critical turn.’\(^4\)

The critical project of politicization was pursued in different ways by the various approaches that were featured in the 1997 Krause and Williams volume. In many respects, however, this book signified both the birth and the swan-song of CSS as a ‘broad church.’ Despite the subsequent growth of the critical literature in Security Studies, the sense of a common critical purpose was watered down, and the book became a mere showcase of diversity and theoretical richness. In the place of CSS, there were now critical schools: the Welsh School, the Copenhagen School, the Paris School.\(^5\)

This phenomenon was analyzed by David Mutimer. Mutimer, one of the contributors to the 1997 volume, interpreted the evolution of CSS as a history of schisms.\(^6\) According to him, Critical Security Studies could not be seen as a coherent set of views, but rather as a more or less vague ‘desire to move beyond the strictures of security as it was studied and practised in the Cold War, and in

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particular a desire to make that move in terms of some form of critique.\textsuperscript{7} Mutimer’s argument suggests that CSS could only be defined in a vague and negative way, that is, by seeing it as an attempt to go beyond both realism and the literature that ‘widened’ and ‘deepened’ the concept of security. Perhaps more importantly, Mutimer identified a tendency in the critical literature for opinions to become entrenched around factions, working to establish theoretical distinctions. Karin Fierke – another contributor to the Krause and Williams volume – argued in a similar way, when she pointed out the persistence of labels in the critical literature. In her words, these labels ‘all too often become weapons in disciplinary mud-slinging matches, which can close down discussion and inquiry before a close reading of specific arguments or consideration of the issues involved.’\textsuperscript{8}

This division of the critical literature along schools and labels would seem, at first glance, to be contradicted by actual developments in the field. In fact, the critical literature was displaying a lively theoretical debate by the time I began my PhD in 2006. A number of scholars were combining theoretical approaches to look at the security issues in the political agenda. The most important example is perhaps the ‘c.a.s.e. collective,’ which served as a forum for critical approaches and a launch-pad for young researchers to develop their work.\textsuperscript{9} According to Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan, one could indeed talk of a ‘combined field,’ of a ‘joint debate’ in which different theories were ‘developed and applied through their interaction.’\textsuperscript{10}

Notwithstanding this, the logic identified by Mutimer and Fierke was present – albeit in a subtle way. This was not a case of the literature becoming splintered, with different approaches ‘at war’ with each other. Rather, the field featured surreptitious exclusions and divisions. Behind the interactions of the ‘joint field’ the division along schools had persisted. In fact, it can be argued that it had grown more entrenched, and despite its own formulations the c.a.s.e. collective played an important part in this

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{8} Fierke, \textit{Critical Approaches to International Security}, 3.
process. There were labels – securitization scholars, poststructuralists, feminists – and these entailed loyalties and different professional socializations. They resulted in research groups, conference panels, joint publications, special issues of journals. At the same time, some authors showed that, for all its claims of inclusiveness and its wish to transcend divisions, the idea of a joint field epitomized in the c.a.s.e. collective had not avoided creating exclusions and silences of its own. In fact, as Mutimer argued, exclusions were unavoidable insofar as they could be considered ‘constitutive’ of the critical field. Critical approaches, by seeking to define who and what their theories were for, necessarily drew a line in which others were placed on the outside. In his words, ‘[t]he overtly inclusive exercise of critical network building, then, seems to produce even more exclusions than the earlier texts [of particular approaches] that were explicit in their exclusions.’

At the same time, other kinds of division and exclusion were present, which were at once more blatant and specific. When looking closer at critical debates, it was not difficult to notice that one of the original voices in the 1997 Krause and Williams volume could no longer be heard. The Welsh School and its idea of ‘security as emancipation’ had been reduced to a few catch-phrases. It no longer had the status of active interlocutor in the conversation taking place. There were very few authors engaging with it in academic publications and conference papers – in contrast, for example, with the popularity of the Copenhagen School or the dynamism of poststructuralist and feminist approaches to security.

The c.a.s.e. collective constitutes perhaps the best example of this situation. Among the members of this collective there were no scholars following the main theoretical tenets of the Welsh School. In its 2006 manifesto, the collective had relied on Wæver’s classification to include this approach among

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14 Ibid.: 19.
15 The reception of the Welsh School in the Security Studies literature will be analyzed in Chapter 2. One example of a superficial engagement is Mark Neocleous’ book-length ‘critique of security,’ which only mentions the work of the Welsh School when asserting (with no supporting evidence) that Ken Booth is ‘as mistaken as one can possibly be about security.’ Mark Neocleous, Critique of Security (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 5.
the most important in the critical field. However, and in addition to dealing with its literature in a very
cursory manner, it had also established a separation between this approach and others, by arguing
that the Welsh School undertook a ‘normative separation of security from power and order.’16 This
was seen as a problematic move. By coupling security with emancipation and being more concerned
with what security should be, the Welsh School was left unable to analyze the actual effects of
security upon the constitution of political normality.

Whatever the intentions of the members of the collective, this interpretation contributed to removing
the Welsh School from the critical forum, as the subsequent dynamics created around the manifesto
effectively shaped the agenda for future critical discussions. Henceforth, the ‘encounters’ in the
critical security field would focus on many themes – the mapping of security fields, securitization,
exceptionalism, identity, risk, and many others – whilst the Welsh School was largely left to ‘toil in its
own vineyard’ of emancipation and normativity.17 In this regard, the c.a.s.e. collective followed the
idea of a ‘division of labour’ announced by the members of the Copenhagen School years before,
when they argued that an emancipatory approach was ‘complementary’ to theirs: ‘it can do what we
voluntarily abstain from, and we can do what it is unable to do.’18

At the same time, a similar desire for a ‘parting of ways’ could be seen in the Welsh School literature.
Having been one of the participants of the Krause and Williams 1997 volume, Booth now criticized
their version of CSS for being ‘promiscuous.’19 He argued that ‘not all critical theories are equally

17 There have been some attempts to bridge the gap between the Welsh School and other critical approaches. See Rita
Floyd, “Towards a Consequentialist Evaluation of Security: Bringing Together the Copenhagen and the Welsh School of
Security Studies,” Review of International Studies 33 (2007); Christopher Browning and Matt McDonald, “Securitization
and Emancipation - Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Chicago, February
building exercise from the standpoint of the Welsh School in Richard Wyn Jones, "On Emancipation: Necessity, Capacity
18 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne
Rienner Publishers, 1998), 35. As will be argued in Chapter 1, this ‘division of labour’ view resulted in a cleavage between
19 Ken Booth, Theory of World Security (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 40. He was more explicit in another
statement, arguing that the Krause and Williams volume ‘stands as a warning against both expecting too much from
pluralism and then oversensitivity about taking specific stands (the editors refused to define “security” for fear of creating
a new orthodoxy). Such academic political correctness leaves the old orthodoxy in place, does not help to create a new
research agenda, and fails to construct a “critical mass” of critical thinkers.’ Ken Booth, "The Human Faces of Terror:
useful when thinking about security,’ and added that there were ‘enormous (and unbridgeable) gulfs’ between his views on security and those of other critical approaches.\textsuperscript{20} Booth’s efforts to define his own theory of security led him to be very critical of other ‘contending approaches,’ as he termed them.\textsuperscript{21} Poststructuralism, for example, was seen as plagued with ‘obscurantism, relativism, and faux radicalism.’\textsuperscript{22} Securitization theory was dubbed ‘state-centric, discourse-dominated, and conservative.’\textsuperscript{23} It remained, in Booth’s view, ‘somewhat stuck in Cold War mindsets’; it was ‘elitist’ and ‘flawed.’\textsuperscript{24} In a reaction to these remarks, Wæver and Buzan contrasted the fruitful interaction between critical approaches with Booth’s attempts to ‘cultivate a situation of competition and theory construction through caricaturing others.’\textsuperscript{25}

The absence of an engagement between the Welsh School and other critical approaches was the result of a dynamic process, which included not only the superficial readings and the ‘division of labour’ (of the Copenhagen School and the c.a.s.e. collective), but also the efforts of the Welsh School to differentiate itself from other approaches. This situation would be reinforced by the persistence of a climate of suspicion towards the idea of emancipation itself. Early on in my research, I noticed that security scholars who subscribed to emancipation were deemed by scholars of other persuasions as ‘naïve’ at best and ‘politically dangerous’ at worst.\textsuperscript{26} Later, whilst presenting my work at conferences, I felt an inordinately hostile reaction towards any mention of the word ‘emancipation’ (talking to colleagues, I discovered that I was not alone in facing this animosity). This led me to explore the suspicion towards the ‘classical discourse of emancipation’ in the work of postmodern and postcolonial authors.\textsuperscript{27} According to these authors, discourses of emancipation were part of a modern

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Booth, \textit{Theory of World Security}, 41, 40.
\item Ibid., 270.
\item Ibid., 271.
\item See his argument in Booth, \textit{Theory of World Security}, 160-172.
\item Wæver and Buzan, "After the Return to Theory: The Past, Present, and Future of Security Studies," 399.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
narrative that sought to impose a universalist worldview, thereby obliterating difference and justifying the subordination of peoples to Western standards. This exploration was useful to understand some of the theoretical assumptions underlying the reception of the Welsh School. It helped to explain the dismissive attitude with which its normative intentions were met in many circles. It also added further reasons for the occasional defensiveness of this approach, and its desire to close ranks and ‘do it without the others.’

A definitive account of the process by which the Welsh School became estranged from critical debates would require a sociological study with interviews of main actors and ‘gatekeepers.’ This thesis does not wish to offer such an account. Rather, it starts from the situation described above – the lack of a systematic engagement between the Welsh School and other critical approaches – and pursues two main lines of enquiry. The first one concerns whether the Welsh School has benefitted from this estrangement, that is, whether it has managed to build, without relying on other critical approaches to security, a solid theoretical framework with which to fulfill its own claims and promises. The second line of enquiry follows from this: if it is shown that the Welsh School has weaknesses in its theoretical framework, can it be developed by returning to critical debates and drawing on other critical approaches?

*Perspective and use of labels*

Before my research questions are laid out more clearly, two sets of clarifications are in order. The first concerns my own perspective whilst reading for and writing this thesis. I am approaching this research from the perspective of the Welsh School. As mentioned above, I am sympathetic to its key motivations and ideas. I believe that this approach has important things to say to academics, policymakers and the wider public. I am persuaded by the idea that political change is much-needed, and that this change must encompass transformations in the way security is understood and put into practice. I also subscribe to the wider emancipatory ideal of this approach: political transformation must ultimately aim at opening up space in people's lives, so that they can make meaningful decisions and pursue courses of action beyond mere survival. This commitment fuels my concern with the lack of open debate about this approach. I want the Welsh School to become more widely and seriously regarded.
However, I do not consider myself an ‘insider.’ Even though I was academically socialized into this approach, I place less emphasis on its substantive content than on the methods and processes it has applied to the critical enquiry about security. In particular, I am drawn to its desire to question established knowledge. I follow Booth’s cautionary remarks about the dangers of orthodox thinking, but seek to turn this questioning drive into a moment of self-reflection by directing it to the Welsh School itself. My hope is that this critical attitude will help me understand the merits and weaknesses of this approach. I am also hoping that it will allow me to change it and contribute to its development.

The second set of clarifications concerns my use of labels. Although my remarks so far have been critical of the divisions and exclusions that frequently underlie the use of labels in the critical security field, for practical reasons I cannot totally dispense with them. So far, I have used Welsh School to refer to the work of Ken Booth, Richard Wyn Jones and Pinar Bilgin, among other authors – an approach to security that distinguishes itself for its explicit normative commitment to emancipation. Together with the Aberystwyth School, this is the label that has been most commonly used.28 I am not happy with these labels for two reasons. Firstly, they constitute an unnecessarily restrictive (and somewhat parochial) delimitation of the scope of this approach. These two labels seem to circumscribe this approach to scholars connected to the Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University. In my opinion, naming the ideas of this approach as a ‘Welsh’ or an ‘Aberystwyth’ phenomenon impairs its inclusiveness and broader appeal. Secondly, the use of the term ‘school’ conveys, in my view, doctrines being passed on. It brings to mind teachers, followers, standard-bearers – a process of schooling. Moreover, it conveys a corpus of truths that is presented and dealt with as distinctive from others. As a result, it ultimately replicates the logic of divisions and exclusions that I wish to question.

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I will abandon the use of the label Welsh School because I do not want its ideas to be restricted to ‘Booth and Wyn Jones and their Aberystwyth students and collaborators,’ to use Buzan and Hansen’s words.\(^{29}\) Instead, I am much more comfortable using the phrase ‘security as emancipation’ framework – or, in short, security as emancipation. This allows me to convey a loose constellation of security scholars in various locations who, in the course of different theoretical and empirical pursuits, have expressed a commitment to emancipatory change. Although not all authors in this constellation share the same definition of emancipation, the great majority of them would agree that emancipatory transformation implies opening up space in people’s lives, so that meaningful decisions can be taken and courses of action can be pursued.\(^{30}\)

The term Critical Security Studies, or CSS, will be used to denote the ‘broad church’ commitment to question the realist orthodoxy and interpret security as a political phenomenon. As mentioned, the critical project of CSS was substantiated in the 1997 volume edited by Krause and Williams. CSS will constitute the reference point for the argument to be developed here. The different dimensions of the politicization of security pursued under the CSS banner – to be identified in Chapter 1 – will constitute the background against which security as emancipation is to be understood and assessed. Moreover, these dimensions will be seen as an ideal to be pursued. In this context, the argument of this thesis will seek to contribute to the original CSS spirit of collaboration between different critical approaches. The collaboration envisaged in this thesis will go beyond the current view of a ‘division of labour,’ and emphasize instead the cumulative effects of different dimensions.

At this point, it is also useful to distinguish between CSS and these ‘critical approaches.’ As has already been discussed, and as will be examined in more detail in Chapter 1, part of the CSS drive remains alive in the so-called ‘critical approaches to security.’\(^{31}\) These critical approaches are not the same as CSS. Whilst the latter will be treated as a ‘broad church’ and a horizon to be pursued, the former can be considered an ongoing conversation between different theoretical perspectives and empirical contributions. In other words, the phrase ‘critical approaches to security’ will be used to convey a debate aimed at questioning understandings and practices of security from a critical perspective. In a

\(^{29}\) See note 28 above.

\(^{30}\) This constellation will be sketched more precisely in Chapter 2.

\(^{31}\) I have borrowed this term from the c.a.s.e. collective. See c.a.s.e. collective, “Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Networked Manifesto.”
nutshell, then, this thesis treats security as emancipation as an original subscriber to the CSS endeavour that has been absent from recent critical debates.\textsuperscript{32}

\textit{Research questions and methodology}

Two main research questions will be addressed in this thesis. Firstly, \textit{can the ‘security as emancipation’ approach, in its current formulation, deliver on its claims and promises, in the context of the effort of politicization put forward under the CSS banner?} In other words, can it provide an interpretation of security as a political phenomenon by relying exclusively on its current ontological and epistemological assumptions? And secondly, \textit{if it is shown that there are weaknesses, in what ways can the analytical and normative outlook of security as emancipation be strengthened through an engagement with other critical resources in the literature?} In other words, can this approach be modified and developed by ‘returning’ to critical debates on security and by engaging with theoretical resources in critical social and political theory that so far have been neglected or not engaged with sufficiently?

In order to answer the first research question, the argument will begin by establishing the criteria with which the merits of security as emancipation are to be judged. This will be done in Chapter 1, which will analyze the Security Studies literature, focusing on the tendency towards the politicization of security. This chapter will identify a number of dimensions of politicization pursued under the critical banner. In subsequent chapters, these dimensions will constitute the yardsticks for measuring the achievements of security as emancipation.

The second question will be addressed by taking a step back and engaging with security as emancipation from the standpoint of other theoretical resources in the literature. Through this process, the framework of the former will be challenged and gaps will be identified. I will argue in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 that security as emancipation can benefit from incorporating a number of new

\textsuperscript{32} Another approach featured in the 1997 volume that does not participate in recent critical debates is subaltern realism. In this respect, see Ayoob, "Defining Security: a Subaltern Realist Perspective." Inversely, the Copenhagen School was not represented in the Krause and Williams volume and saw itself as pursuing an agenda different to CSS. See Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, \textit{Security: A New Framework for Analysis}, 34-35. More recently, however, members of the Copenhagen School such as Wæver have participated in critical debates, and securitization theory can now be considered one of the most important critical approaches.
insights that so far have been neglected or insufficiently theorized. Also, in each of these three chapters I will assess the implications of this engagement for the development of the analytical and normative framework of security as emancipation.

Although empirical illustrations will be used to elucidate some of the main points in the argument, this is primarily a theoretical thesis, whose validity will rely on the internal consistency of its propositions and on the extent to which they can be backed up by existing literature. The argument will deal with different literatures with varying degrees of depth: the Security Studies literature, in particular the ‘widening’ and ‘deepening’ literature up to the 1997 Krause and Williams volume that gave birth to CSS; the literature inspired by, or contributing to, the ‘critical turn’ in Security Studies; the security as emancipation literature; the work of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler on the body, the subject and power; some secondary Foucaultian literature, dealing in particular with the concept of governmentality and with Foucault’s notions of power and freedom; and some feminist literature addressing the question of experience.

Drawing on these literatures, this thesis makes a number of claims to knowledge. Firstly, it locates security as emancipation within the Security Studies literature from the 1980s onwards and within CSS. Specifically, it shows in what ways the former has pursued the critical project of politicization of security. Secondly, the thesis analyzes in depth the main tenets of security as emancipation and responds to the most common criticisms mobilized against this approach. Thirdly, the thesis suggests a new way to engage with security as emancipation – assessing to what extent it helps us to understand the politicization of security. Fourthly, and following from this, the thesis challenges this approach from the standpoint of other critical approaches (both in Security Studies and in social and political theory) and argues for the incorporation of insights that have been neglected or not engaged with sufficiently. Next, the thesis assesses the implications of the incorporation of these insights and lays the groundwork for a revised emancipatory framework. Finally, the Conclusion of the thesis reflects on the consequences of this reconsideration for the critical security literature and for the CSS project.

At this point, a couple of caveats are in order about my use of the security as emancipation literature. Firstly, as mentioned I understand security as emancipation as a loose constellation of authors...
working on security issues who have maintained an explicit commitment to emancipatory change in the course of their own theoretical and empirical pursuits. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the main contributors to the development of the conceptual and theoretical framework of this approach have been Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones. Although nuances and occasional differences of opinion can be identified, in the course of my research I found no reason to believe that any of the authors that I included in this constellation would disagree, in a fundamental way, with the key assumptions and ideas put forward by these two authors. For this reason, I will privilege an engagement with the version of security as emancipation provided by them.

A crucial resource for my engagement with this literature will be Ken Booth’s *Theory of World Security*. This book, published in 2007, is undoubtedly the most comprehensive formulation of security as emancipation so far produced. It constitutes the culmination of Booth’s security theorizing during the past decades, and incorporates the main theoretical and empirical contributions of the various authors connected with this literature. Occasionally, this book will be my primary source to identify the views of security as emancipation on a particular topic. I am aware that this may have prevented me from fully appreciating possible differences of opinion in this literature. However, the argument that I will put forward requires that I take security as emancipation as a more or less coherent approach – and thus that some nuances are bracketed. I am confident, however, that relying primarily on Booth’s work will allow me to present a balanced picture of security as emancipation.

This leads me to the second point, which relates to the kind of inferences I aim to draw from the analysis of the security as emancipation literature. This literature is broad in the scope of themes covered; it is complex in the ideas it mobilizes; it is extensive in its sheer number of pages. It has also been a ‘work in progress’ for more than two decades. It has evolved constantly, with new insights being incorporated and ideas being tested and abandoned.\(^{33}\) As a result of this, some themes do not form coherent threads running through the literature; on other themes, there are disparate and unconnected elements. I will argue that the ambiguity on certain themes is a problem in itself, which signals a certain lack of self-reflection on the part of this approach – and I will take those

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inconsistencies as cues for my own theoretical reflections. However, the occasional absence of coherent threads is also a methodological issue. It highlights the fact that, even though I have always backed up my points with references to the literature, I can only claim to offer one interpretation of it. It means that occasionally I had to decide which elements of the literature to privilege. Sometimes, when there were omissions and less developed themes, in order to interpret the literature I brought in authors that have inspired security as emancipation or offered similar views.

These are, I believe, the limitations of a theoretical work of this nature. In my defence, I can only reiterate that this thesis is a sympathetic engagement with security as emancipation, and that I have made all possible efforts to offer a judicious interpretation of it.

Outline of the argument

The objective of Chapter 1 is to set the stage for an analysis of security as emancipation. I do this by focusing on the Security Studies literature from the 1980s onwards and tracing the movement towards the politicization of security. I show how Security Studies, whilst grappling with the tenets of a statist and military-centred realist orthodoxy, began to see security as a phenomenon resulting from political assumptions and struggles and having political effects. With the birth of Critical Security Studies (CSS), this tendency gained a renewed energy, with the incorporation of a set of theoretical and methodological tools that allowed for a more robust critique of realism. I suggest that with CSS the movement towards politicization became a more purposeful and multifaceted endeavour. In sum, by analyzing the origins and main tenets of politicization as a critical project, Chapter 1 establishes the context in which security as emancipation is to be analyzed and judged.

Chapter 2 introduces this approach and begins an assessment of how it has lived up to the critical project. I show how security as emancipation has attempted to carve out a difference in relation to other critical approaches by pursuing an approach to politicization that privileges the normative

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34 This will be particularly clear in my engagement with the picture of reality provided by security as emancipation. See Chapter 3.
35 Thus, in Chapter 4 I make a brief incursion into standpoint feminism in order to understand the view of experience put forward by security as emancipation. In Chapter 5, I engage with Steven Lukes’s writings on power to understand in more depth how security as emancipation understands the notion of power.
judgment and political reconsideration of current security arrangements. The assessment of this literature begins with a review of the criticisms so far leveled against this approach – which provides the opportunity for an elucidation of common misunderstandings. On the basis of this, I suggest an alternative way to engage with security as emancipation. Drawing on the dimensions of politicization identified in Chapter 1, I suggest that this approach suffers from an inconsistent theorization of the connection between security and politics. In particular, it does not seem to have the theoretical tools in place with which to present a sophisticated account of important facets of politicization – namely the constitution of security and its political effects. As a result, its starting point is not sufficiently politicized.

I develop the latter insight in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, which provide a detailed engagement with specific themes of security as emancipation. In each of these three chapters, the two main research questions of this thesis come into force. Can security as emancipation, given its own epistemological and ontological assumptions, live up to its purpose of politicizing security? If not, can its analytical and normative framework be strengthened by engaging with hitherto neglected or insufficiently examined theoretical resources in Security Studies, and in wider critical social and political theory?

Chapter 3 focuses on the theme of the reality of security. In it, I question the premise of security as emancipation that theory should seek to engage with the real condition of insecurity of ‘real people in real places.’ I demonstrate that the picture of reality provided by this approach ultimately rests upon a problematic understanding of the connection between politics and materiality – with the material dimension overriding social and political considerations. I argue that this picture of reality has limitations and cannot provide the basis for the political arguments that security as emancipation wishes to make. The attempts of this approach to undertake a normative judgment and political reconsideration of security are not sufficiently grounded upon an awareness of the inherently political nature of reality. In order to address this shortcoming, I make the case for a reconsideration of the relationship between materiality and politics in the picture of reality. Drawing on the Security Studies literature and on the work of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, I argue for the primacy of the political dimension in the reality of security. This reconsideration develops the capacity of security as emancipation to analyze and question the constitution of this reality. It also opens new normative avenues, namely by identifying the body as a potential site for transformation. In this chapter I also
argue that Butler’s notion of subversion – that is, the ‘erosion’ and redefinition of the meanings and norms that constitute reality – can be an important addition to the emancipatory framework.

Chapter 4 looks at the notion of threat. Taking on board the lessons learned from Chapter 3 in relation to the reality of security, I take issue with the preponderance that security as emancipation gives to the ‘experience of the victims’ when theorizing threat. Drawing on the debate between standpoint and postmodern feminism, I argue that relying on experience at face-value overlooks the political processes through which experience is constituted alongside the experiencing subject. This insight constitutes the springboard for an analysis of the relationship between security and identity. In this context, I demonstrate that the definition of threat/security is implicated in the constitution of the identity of the subject under threat and the subject to be secured. Incorporating the mutual constitution of security and identity opens up a new area of enquiry for security as emancipation: the processes of subjectivation that accompany security understandings and practices. The focus on subjectivation furthers the analysis of how security comes about and how it impacts upon the political realm. At the same time, this insight strengthens the normative capacity of this approach. In particular, it allows for processes of subjectivation to be addressed as possible sites of emancipatory practice.

Chapter 5 focuses on power. I begin by questioning how the understanding of power put forward by security as emancipation lives up to the purpose of presenting a thoroughly politicized view of security – that is, an awareness of its complex political assumptions and effects. My argument is that, so far, this approach has not gone beyond an unnecessarily restrictive view of power as domination and determination of action. This view ultimately impairs a full recognition of the multiple effects of security. In order to address this problem, I make the case for the incorporation of a Foucaultian approach to power. Through it, security comes to be recognized as a form of government and constitution of subjects. Complementing in this way the current views on power offered by security as emancipation has important implications. On the one hand, it broadens the analytical scope of this approach, allowing for a better understanding of the political impact of predominant security arrangements. On the other hand, it provides the opportunity for a reconsideration of the notion of freedom. This latter move opens the door for resistance to be put forward as a transformative strategy in the broader emancipatory framework. Resistance, or the practice of freedom through the
permanent countering of power and governmental practices, has the potential to complement current notions of emancipation put forward in the security as emancipation literature, which are better suited to respond to the ‘domineering’ face of power.

In sum, this thesis advances three main theoretical moves for security as emancipation. In Chapter 3, I reconsider the relationship between materiality and politics in the picture of reality. In Chapter 4, I make the case for a deeper awareness of the mutual constitution of security and identity. In Chapter 5, I put forward an understanding of security as a form of power that constitutes and governs subjects. These three moves show that this approach has much to gain from engaging with other critical approaches to security, as well as with theoretical resources in critical social and political theory that so far have been neglected or only dealt with in a limited way. Incorporating insights from these approaches would allow security as emancipation to deliver more consistently on its promise of undertaking the normative judgment and political reconsideration of security.

The objective of the Conclusion is two-fold. Firstly, it assesses the implications of these three moves for the theory of security as emancipation as a whole. What is left of it? Does an engagement with other theories and approaches water down the emancipatory purpose or betray the fundamental commitments of this approach? Also, what are the practical consequences of the thesis for approaching specific security issues from an emancipatory perspective? Secondly, the Conclusion explores the implications of this discussion for the critical security field, and the place of security as emancipation within it. I argue that this approach, if revised along the lines suggested here, can make an important contribution to critical debates and to the CSS endeavour. In particular, it has the potential to illustrate the cumulative effects of the different dimensions of the politicization of security – thus showing that it is possible to go beyond the ‘division of labour’ between different approaches.

Rethinking emancipation in Critical Security Studies

This thesis provides an assessment and a reconsideration of the security as emancipation approach. Animated by my own commitment to emancipation and by my dissatisfaction with its current place in
critical debates, I set out to question the emancipatory project in Security Studies with a view to pushing it forward. In this context, my objective is first to contribute to a better understanding of security as emancipation, and second to develop a version of this approach that is more theoretically sophisticated, more aware of its current limitations and more predisposed to a systematic engagement with other critical approaches.

This reconsideration is firmly located within recent critical debates on security. In this context, I aim to contribute to more pluralism and openness in these debates. Although I agree with Mutimer that any intellectual endeavour entails an exclusionary process of ‘othering,’ I believe that exclusions and divisions can be minimized. Firstly, refocusing the critical discussion on dimensions of politicization – instead of schools or approaches – lessens current fault-lines and has the potential to further the collaboration between authors with different theoretical persuasions. Secondly, revising security as emancipation and reinstating it as an active interlocutor effectively increases the pluralism of current critical discussions. Finally, the explicit normative commitment of security as emancipation has the potential to be a ‘critical consciousness’ of other approaches, thereby encouraging further development.

Finally, this reconsideration is undertaken with the ideal of Critical Security Studies in the background. My goal is to develop the original idea of CSS as a comprehensive approach to the politicization of security that is predicated on collaboration and constructive criticism. I will suggest that security as emancipation, once modified along the lines proposed here, shows how synergies can be established between different dimensions of the politicization of security – and, in more general terms, between the deconstructive and reconstructive agenda of Critical Security Studies. In this respect, the thesis aims to serve as an example for other theoretical approaches whilst also advancing the project of Critical Security Studies.

As will be argued, some authors that can be located within the security as emancipation literature have begun to show possible synergies between the deconstructive and the reconstructive agendas. See, in particular, Eli Stamnes, “Critical Security Studies and the United Nations Preventive Deployment in Macedonia,” International Peacekeeping 11, no. 1 (2004); Richard Jackson, Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-terrorism (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005); Fierke, Critical Approaches to International Security. However, unlike what is done in this thesis, these developments have not been accompanied by a systematic questioning of the security as emancipation approach.